

HINTS AND ESSAYS,
THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL,
INTENDED BRIEFLY TO EXPOSE
THE
CORRUPT PRINCIPLES OF CALVINISM,
AND BRIEFLY TO OFFER
OTHER PRINCIPLES
BETTER CORRESPONDING
WITH REASON AND SCRIPTURE.

Published more especially for the Benefit of
the Younger Part of CALVINISTICAL
CHRISTIANS: With a Prefatory Address
to such Young Persons.

BY A LAY-MAN.

K

*Hear now, O house of Israel; is not my way
equal? Are not your ways unequal?*

Ezek. xviii. xxv.

Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Luke xii. 57.

Prove all things.

1 Thess. v. 21.

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James Earl Ray

СООБЩЕ ОТ НАШЕГО ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЯ

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O. T. H. B. S. R. I. C. I. S. I. S.

[illegible]

1917-1918



TO THE
YOUNGER PART OF CALVINISTICAL BELIEVERS.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

LET me request you to read the three first of these papers with attention and impartiality. It will not take up much of your time; and it may be of some service to you: which consideration is my reason for asking the favour. Whoever attempts to rectify the mistakes of others, should esteem it a *favour*, if he get a patient hearing: because he *seems* to arrogate superiority to himself.

I BELIEVE that many of you are pious and good, altho' mistaken

vi DEDICATION.

taken in several articles which I conceive to be of great importance—but not important enough to frustrate your salvation. While he is really upright, I am well assured, a man will never be condemned for mistakes by his Maker, however his short-sighted fellow creatures may think fit to treat him.

You will partly understand what I think of your case, when I tell you I apprehend it to be, in one view, exactly similar to that of a man, who professes great veneration for some excellent personage, and, aiming to speak in his praise, says some good things of him; but many others very bad, and very dishonourable. The man's mind (from whatever cause) is unhappily

DEDICATION. vii

pily distorted : but his *intention* is perfectly good ; and therefore it is impossible that such an excellent personage should regard him with anger. — If this opinion of mine be thought harsh ; I would wish you to consider the reasons which have induced me to take it up. You will find them in the three first of the following papers. And, should you take the trouble to read the other two, I hope it will do you no harm.

I address myself particularly to you, my young friends, because your prejudices are more likely to be removed, than if they had been of longer standing. What is offered, however, may be of use to some who are very differently minded from you.

viii DEDICATION.

you.——If I know any thing of my own heart, my motive for making these papers public, is a desire to promote *genuine religion*. Should they effect this, in any degree, I should account myself very *happy*: happier than “they, whose corn, and wine, “and oil, are increased.” Acknowledging myself very unworthy of such happiness, I humbly commit this little attempt to the care of that most wise and gracious Being, who directs the affairs of this, and all other worlds, and “without “whom not even a sparrow “falls to the ground.”

A N

A N
E S S A Y

O N T H E
Q U E S T I O N,

W H E T H E R
REASON BE THE PROPER JUDGE OF
SCRIPTURE?

CHRISTIANS receive the Bible as containing a divine revelation; and the followers of Mahomet pay the same respect to the Koran. Now I would beg leave to enquire, how is either

B party

party justified in what they do? If at all; I should think by that *reason* * which is essential to human nature. This it is which judges of the arguments brought to prove the authority of the reputed writers of the different books, and the genuineness of those books, (*i. e.*) whether they be indeed the productions of those writers. And as

* The word Reason (agreeably, I apprehend, to its most common acceptation) is here used in a large sense, to signify that *intellectual power* which discovers truth, whether by *intuition* or by *argument*; and which, by the same means discovers what we know of morals.

one

Proper Judge of SCRIPTURE? . 3

one of the principal arguments for any divine revelation must be deduced from its *internal character*, considered in a moral view, concerning *this* therefore reason must decide, with respect to the revelations of the Old and New Testaments.

YET there is a large number of Christians who affirm, that what is absolutely necessary to salvation, though written in the Bible, cannot be understood without a further revelation from Heaven. But I should be glad to know how they were informed of this. I would also

4 *Whether REASON be the*

wish a person of this sort to tell how that *can* be a revelation which *cannot be understood*. And why does such a person prefer the Bible to the Koran? If you were to ask him, I doubt not, he would very readily assign you a reason; and most probably it would be drawn from the superior excellence of the Bible; though, at the same time, he would tell you, *That reason is no judge of the contents of the book which he prefers*. And, notwithstanding this *principle*, which he thinks to be of the greatest importance, he would not scruple to give you his reasons, why
he

Proper Judge of SCRIPTURE? 5

he differs from some of his fellow-christians with respect to various points of doctrine. What is this man doing? Certainly he is reasoning concerning the doctrines of scripture: and that doctrine he rejects (as not scriptural) and this he receives.—Why?—Because he thinks he has *reason*.

IF the scriptures be not cognizable by any faculties we possess, to what end should we study them? And how are we in any sort *blameworthy* for not obeying the gospel? Since we cannot *obey* what we cannot un-

B 3 *derstand*.

derstand. “ But we may understand when enlightened by the grace of God, though not before.” Yet how do we know that the ever blessed God doth at all communicate his influence, further than to maintain our existence? If the Bible tells us he does; how do we know the Bible tells us so, unless when we read that book we *understand it*? If we do *not* understand it, we cannot get our information from thence. If *you* have had a particular revelation from God, acquainting you *that there is no revelation in the Bible,*

Bible, be so good as to give us proof.

SHOULD it be said, " We
" are all endowed (either natu-
" rally or supernaturally) with
" a capacity to understand from
" the word of God thus much.
" That there is a great deal to
" be known, in order to salva-
" tion, which (though found in
" the Bible) cannot be under-
" stood without a further super-
" natural revelation :"—I must
confess, for my part, that I have
not this capacity. And I am
persuaded, whatever any man
may imagine, *neither has he*. If

8. *Whether* REASON be the

he has, he can make it evident to all candid people, that the proposition here mentioned is warranted by the Bible: for I suppose him to acknowledge we are all able to judge of this matter.

IN the mean time, it should seem, that, as *rational beings*, we are capable of perceiving the established meaning of language, of discerning between truth and falsehood, and of judging concerning moral good and evil. This *power* we use when reading any book whatever; and by this *power* we are enabled to understand

derstand the contents of the book, to judge of its doctrines, whether they be true or false; and of its moral tendency, whether it be good or otherwise. If, then, this *power* belong to us, as *rational beings*, how can it be supposed, that we are naturally unable to understand the Bible? It is true, there may be some things in it which we shall never understand. If so, it is the same to us as if they were not there. They cannot be needful for us to know.

I WOULD, by no means, suppress that formidable objection.

“ If

10 *Whether* REASON be the

“ If reason be able to deter-
“ mine the sense of scripture,
“ why should we pray for assist-
“ ance?” In reply to it, I
would beg leave to offer the
following observations.

IN the first place I would ob-
serve, it is universally agreed
among Christians, that in the
Bible we have a divine revela-
tion. But,

29.29 Secondly, An *unintelligible re-*
velation is a contradiction as gross
as possible.

THIRDLY,

Proper Judge of Scripture? II

THIRDLY, Because a man can do more when assisted, than when he has none to help him, it does not follow, that if he has *no* assistance he can do *nothing*; but the contrary follows, or rather is implied in the terms. Assistance always supposes the *concurring agency* of the person assisted.

FOURTHLY, Whatever knowledge we get from the scripture by divine assistance, this knowledge must perfectly correspond with the plain and obvious principles of reason. To make this evident I would observe,

FIFTHLY,

FIFTHLY, Should any one say that, being divinely illuminated, he was thereby enabled to know, from some obscure passage of scripture—That one intelligent being may wantonly torment and persecute another, and, in so doing, act consistently with the most perfect rectitude—This would be a dreadful mistake indeed, And now, what determines this to be a mistake? Doubtless it is *reason*, with whose plain principles the doctrine of this enlightened person clashes, and will not correspond.

FROM

FROM these observations it appears, that (altho' much more knowledge may be gained from the scripture by divine assistance than without it) the meaning of scripture must be determined by *reason* in the last resort.

THE gospel is generally received in England as a divine revelation of truth and duty. But a native of this country, who should receive it for such without any better reason (a remark which has often been repeated) would act an exceeding weak, and a very criminal part. Therefore, although a native of this country,

country, I am bound to enquire after better reasons whereon to build my faith. And I apprehend (waving all others) the two best proofs that the gospel is a divine revelation, are drawn from its *internal character*, with regard to truth and moral tendency, and from its *effects* in a moral view upon those who have most sincerely received it—— These two articles being connected with its *pretensions*. Without these proofs all others are vain. These are obvious ; others remote.

BUT

BUT now, how am I to judge concerning the *internal character* of the gospel, unless I bring it to the test of my reason? Dr. Doddridge says one of the best proofs is drawn from *hence*; yet this, he affirms, must not be brought to the test of reason. If so, I am utterly ignorant whether it be *excellent* or otherwise; and I am equally ignorant, whether the gospel has had a *good* or a *bad* effect on those who have cordially received it. If the report of reason merit no regard, I am unable to tell you which book is most valuable, the Bible or the Koran: I know no difference

ference between Jesus and Mahomet; between a Christian and a Turk*; between a person whom I judge to be religious and good, and another whom I think to be impious, wicked, abandoned.

BUT, whatever respect may be due to great *names* (and there are few names I venerate more than Dr. Doddridge's) as a *reasonable* being, I am conscious of

* I would be far from intimating that a Turk, *because a Turk*, is therefore a bad man: but I believe there has been, and there is, much greater, much more exalted virtue among Christians.

a law

a *law* concerning good and evil written upon my HEART *. Now who, I pray, inscribed it there but the ever blessed God, to whom I owe my *nature*; seeing he is the author of *universal nature*? And if this *law* be his inscription, is it not, then, in the highest degree, sacred and inviolable? It is: and, of consequence, “ Woe unto them, “ who, [presumptuously] put “ evil for *good*, and good for “ *evil*.” To this sacred *law* I am indispensibly obliged to bring

* See Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chap. ii. ver. 14, 15.

C

what-

whatever book it is which is said to contain a *divine revelation*, before I receive it as such : and by this *law* I am indispensibly obliged to judge of the *effects* such a book produces on those, who cordially receive the revelation which it is said to contain. It would be a crime of the first magnitude to acknowledge a book to be of *divine* authority, when condemned by the *law* I am speaking of, as a *wicked* book : and if not an equal crime, it would yet be a very great one, to esteem and treat a man as good and just, when, by this *law*, condemned as a wicked and unrighteous

righteous person. This, then, is the *test* whereby we are to determine the *character* of the gospel, and of those who receive it. But certainly *this* was not thought the proper test by a gentleman who, to express the greatness of his faith, declared to me, that if the Bible had affirmed concerning *black*, that it was *white*, he would have believed it: though (I apprehend) his *zeal* considerably exceeded his *ability*.

For my part, I am well convinced of the *divine excellence* of the gospel. The voice

of *reason* hath convinced me. To it likewise I owe my conviction, that Christianity hath rendered its *genuine disciples* more like, than any other persons, to the amiable original of all excellence. — I say, however wickedly many have acted while they bore the Christian name, *reason* hath convinced me, that human nature was never so adorned with *moral beauty and dignity*, as among Christians. Yet I sincerely respect the character of an Aurelius, a Timoleon, a Phocion, &c. &c.

FROM

FROM the Christian revelation, it should seem that the human race was left in a state of *weakness*, that thereby we might be engaged to look up to our heavenly parent for his kind *assistance*, which he hath declared himself much readier to grant us, than any earthly parent can be to give good things to his children. And it should seem, that our natural *weakness* doth imply an inability clearly to discern religious truth by natural light. But some there are, who say, we can no more discern religious truth, till we receive power by a divine operation up-

on our minds—no more than a blind man can behold colours or shapes. Therefore, say they, before we are thus divinely wrought upon, the Bible is unintelligible to us. Beside what I have already advanced against this strange opinion, I beg leave to offer the following passages of scripture: though it may be alleged, that I do not *understand* these *passages*. If I do, they acquaint me, that revelation gives men an opportunity to exercise a faculty which they possessed *previously* to the revelation.

OUR

OUR blessed Saviour tells Nicodemus, that, "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." Now where the organs of vision are *wanting*, the light is of *no use*; and a person who *has them not*, is not at liberty to *choose* between darkness and light. I argue, therefore, that men were *in a capacity to see the light*, that is, *to understand the gospel*. "The grace" (or, as it is generally explained, the gospel) of God, which "bringeth salvation, *hath appeared* to all men," as St. Paul declares to Titus. Now,

whatever *appears* is *seen*; and whoever they are that *see*, they have *the faculty of seeing*. But the persons mentioned in this passage are *all men*, to whom the gospel was preached. Therefore, I conclude, that *all men* who have the gospel with them, have *the faculty of seeing* that glorious light; that is, they have an *ability to understand the gospel*. Again; the same apostle avers to the Corinthians, concerning himself and his brethren, that, “by manifestation of the
“ truth, they commended them-
“ selves to every man’s con-
“ science.” But I would ask,

can

can the truth be manifested to any one who cannot understand it? Or is any one qualified to judge of what he is unable to understand? St. Paul, however, affirms, that the truth *was* manifested: and I profess I can never bring myself to think him capable of such an absurdity, as the offering *colours* to a *blind man* for his opinion of them. It seems very fair, therefore, to infer, that the persons to whom the truth was manifested (that is, to whom the gospel was preached) *were able to understand the gospel.*

Now,

Now, seeing we are qualified as *rational beings*, to judge concerning true and false, good and evil: and seeing we know not that any thing is true or false, good or evil, but as the voice of *reason* pronounces concerning it *: and

* One would think that neither of these two articles could be denied by any sober man, when, at the same time, he *uses his reason* in determining of true and false, good and evil; and *never* determines but according to the *verdict* of his reason. No matter whether the determination be right or wrong. There is *true*, and there is *false* reasoning. The wildest enthusiast says, “The scriptures are true; my opinions are scriptural; therefore *they* are true.” Again; “My

Proper Judge of SCRIPTURE? 27

and seeing the above quotations
so plainly indicate the following
propo-

“ My affections are moved ; therefore
“ God is present with me in a *special*
“ *manner.*” Again ; “ The scriptures
“ teach that reason is no proper judge of
“ revelation, and that the *natural dictates*
“ of reason are *false* : the scriptures are
“ true ; therefore I conclude that reason
“ is no proper judge of revelation, and
“ that when reason presumes to say, this
“ is good, and that is evil, *it says false.*
“ Moreover, because the scriptures of
“ truth teach me, that what reason calls
“ evil, is, in reality, perfectly good, I
“ conclude it is so ; (ex. gr.) Because
“ the scriptures teach me, that it was
“ perfectly consistent with the divine
“ goodness to create innumerable mul-
“ titudes of men for *eternal and most ex-*
“ *quisite*

proposition to be a *true* one, I think we may safely judge, *That men, as rational beings, are in a capacity to understand the scriptures.* And, if so, it should seem we are *in duty bound* to admit no inter-

“ *quisite misery* ; therefore I conclude it

“ was perfectly consistent, whatever rea-

“ son may alledge to the contrary.”—

Now pray what is all this, but *reasoning even in despite of reason* ? And here permit me to ask, who is most likely to be in the right—he that, *in fact*, determines his religious opinion by his reason, at the same time *denying it*, and avowedly *rejecting* what he owns to be *rational principles*—or he that, believing it both his duty and his privilege, proceeds upon rational principles to make sober and serious enquiry for religious truth ?

pretation

pretation of scripture which *reason* doth not approve and authorize. And, therefore, we are

obliged in conscience to bring all doctrines, even those said to be most orthodox and scriptural, to *the test of reason*, and to receive or reject them according as they will or will not *endure* that test.

But methinks I hear one exclaiming, "Behold the *pride* of this "wretch!" I would civilly ask

such a person, whether he should think himself warranted to affirm, that any one was *proud* who declared his *sight* to be so good, that he could easily distinguish a man from a tree, and one

one man from another; and so good, that he could see and distinguish every thing about him, as far as needful to make his life comfortable, and enable him to do his proper business? If the man's sight were like other men's sight, I think it must be allowed, that such a declaration would not prove him *a proud man*: neither would it prove him such, if, when a person should tell him he was unable to distinguish a man from a tree, &c. he should still persist to declare himself *able*. And certainly one is no more proud for saying that his *reason* is able to distinguish
true

true from false, and good from evil, which is the *proper office* of his *reason*—no more proud than he would be for saying, that his *eye* was able to distinguish a man from a tree, or one man from another, which is *the proper office* of his *eye*. If my opponent should still insist, “That whatever a man’s eyes may be, his reason is *blind* ;” after begging the favour of him to read this paper over again, I should content myself with observing, that while men, as *men*, are conscious that they possess a *faculty* which distinguishes true from false, and good from evil, even

as they are conscious that they possess bodily *organs* *, which distinguish a man from a tree, and one man from another, they ought to let none persuade them they are *under a delusion*, any more than they would let some persons, who are so unhappy as to have the jaundice, persuade them that they do not see the *true colour* of objects. This comparison indeed does not suit exactly; because reason is asserted to be not only *disordered*, but *dead* with respect to religi-

* I am aware that, philosophically speaking, it is not the *eye*, but the *soul* which distinguishes.

ous

ous and spiritual objects. —

The more astonishing that reasonable beings should give credit to such an extravagant assertion.

D HINTS

H I N T S

PREFIXED TO THE

Rev. Mr. MASON'S TREATISE

O N

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

IT is pity, that a book so excellent as this should have any blemish; but we are well apprized, that every work of man is liable to imperfection: indeed we cannot doubt, that it is fairly *chargeable* upon every human production. Therefore, I hope that no candid person will think

think me worthy of blame, if, while in general I greatly respect this excellent book, I take the liberty to intimate, that it contains some things *mistaken* for truths. That this is really the case the reader (I persuade myself) will discern, if he will take the trouble to compare what the author hath said with what here follows.

AND I beg leave to enquire,

QUES. 1. Is it not plainly our *duty* to endeavour sincerely to understand the truth, and then to receive it in the love of it?

36 HINTS *prefixed* to Mr. MASON'S

QU. 2. Can we perform this *duty*, unless we *examine*, with care and seriousness, all and every of those religious doctrines which we profess to believe?

QU. 3. Can we *retain* such doctrines as will not *endure* examination, and yet retain a *good conscience*?

QU. 4. Is it sufficient to *make* a doctrine to be true, that we are *told* it is a true doctrine, and it is a very *wicked* thing to believe otherwise?

QU.

Qu. 5. Do we not certainly know that ten and ten *are*, and that ten and five are *not* equal to twenty?

Qu. 6. If the *reverse* were said to be affirmed by holy writ, ought we not to *reject* such an interpretation as manifestly false, and *impossible* to be true?

Qu. 7. Are we at all more certain that ten and ten *are*, and that ten and five are *not* equal to twenty, than we are certain that what is natural is, and for ever must be *essentially different* from what is moral?

38 HINTS prefixed to Mr. MASON'S

Qu. 8. Is any one a wicked man, because his complection is naturally a *dark*, and not a *fair* complection ?

Qu. 9. Is it not equally natural for a man to have a certain *complection*, and certain *appetites* and *passions* ?

Qu. 10. What reason can be assigned why natural external complection should *not*, and yet natural passions and appetites *should* constitute a man wicked, or bad, or morally depraved ?

Qu.

QU. 11. As we see at once, intuitively, that it is absolutely *impossible* for two and two to make *five*; do we not, in the very same manner, see that it is absolutely *impossible* for *completion*, or *bodily figure*, or *understanding*, (whether great or small) or for *appetite*, or *instinct*, or *passion*, or for any thing NATURAL, to make a man either *wicked* or *good*?

QU. 12. Can any thing constitute one a *bad* man, but the *abuse* of liberty?

D 4

QU.

QU. 13. Is it not the *right use* of liberty *only*, which constitutes one a *good* man?

QU. 14. If it be impossible that any thing *natural* should constitute one a *bad* man, is not the doctrine which asserts that the human nature, *as such*, is morally corrupt or depraved, *impossible to be a true doctrine*?

QU. 15. Is not the ever blessed God the author of universal nature, and therefore of the *human nature*?

QU. 16. Is it not most reasonable to think, with Job, that

we

we are the workmanship of God,
by him fashioned in the womb?

Qu. 17. Supposing (however absurd) that the first man's transgression constituted the human nature a *wicked nature*; who can understand the difference between upholding mankind in a capacity to propagate a wicked nature, and creating a nature *originally* wicked.

Qu. 18. What reason can be given why beings should not be placed *originally* in a state of probation?

Qu.

42 HINTS prefixed to Mr. MASON'S

QU. 19. Why should it be thought, that human appetites and passions are in the least *unsuitable* to a state of probation?

QU. 20. If a man deserves punishment, is it not because he is an *offender*?

QU. 21. And should any other being voluntarily endure punishment for him, would that make him *not an offender*, and so *not punishable*; or would he, *of necessity*, be still an *offender*, and so still *punishable of necessity*?

QU. 22. Doth not justice plainly require that the offender,

der, and the offender *only*, should be punished?

Qu. 23. Doth not justice plainly *forbid* to punish the *innocent*?

Qu. 24. If it be allowed that justice *forbids* to punish the *innocent*, how is it possible that justice should be *satisfied* by that very thing which it *forbids*?

Qu. 25. Is it universally true, or universally false, that the mere *consent* of a being to be punished, renders him in *justice punishable*?

Qu.

44 HINTS prefixed to Mr. MASON'S

QU. 26. Is it not most evident that, if a being be punished without any *other* reason than his *consent*, the punishment must be *inconsistent with justice*?

QU. 27. If (as it should seem) an *innocent being*, though he *consent* to be punished, cannot be *in justice punishable*; if the *only* righteous ground of a being's punishment be *his own offence*; if the punishment of an innocent being (tho' the thing were in itself *right*) *cannot* make an offender *not punishable*; doth it not follow, that the doctrine

trine which asserts *the satisfaction of justice by vicarious punishment*, is a doctrine *false and erroneous*?

Qu. 28. If in opposition to reason, we believe that the human nature, as such, is a *wicked nature*; if we believe that the mere *consent* of an innocent being to be punished renders him *properly and truly punishable*; if we believe, that the punishment of such an innocent being may make an offender *punishable no longer*; why then are we not consistent enough to shew our opposition to reason, and our contempt of it in every instance;

par-

46 HINTS *prefixed* to Mr. MASON'S

particularly by declaring our unfeigned assent and consent to such propositions as these; that a body moving from one point to another in a *crooked* line, goes the *nearest* way; that it is very possible for a thing to *be*, and *not* to be, at the same time; that the most *virtuous* and *excellent* men are *the fittest* to be *hanged*; and that the veriest *villains* are *the fittest* to be *honoured* and *rewarded*?

IN sincerity and uprightness, and with a view to serve the Christian cause, I have offered the preceding queries. I am
per-

persuaded that all religion, as far as it is genuine, is a reasonable service : and this persuasion was the ground of my attempt to rectify, by a few hints, Mr. M—'s mistake, concerning the human nature ; which he represents as morally corrupt in its *essence* : and concerning human salvation, which he teaches is the effect of the vicarious sufferings of our Blessed Saviour. What has been suggested, perhaps, will be severely condemned by those, who, speaking in a stile somewhat lofty, call themselves orthodox (that is *infallible*) men. But, at least, there are

48 HINTS *prefixed* to Mr. MASON'S

are *some* men truly wise and good, I hope *many*, who will *not* condemn it : my own heart approves it : and the omniscient judge knows my upright intention.

It will be observed, that the first four questions have not the less weight for intimating nothing very different from Mr. M—'s sentiments.

AND I beg it may be observed, that if it be admitted (agreeably to what is intimated in Qu. 12 and 13,) that our moral character is *solely* constituted

tuted by the use we make of our liberty—this by no means excludes the value of *evangelical privileges*, for which we can never be thankful enough. But it is obvious, that *these* do not render one *a good man*: it is the *improvement* of these. If they are *abused*, the man is *worse* than if he had never enjoyed such privileges.

NEED I beg it may be observed, further, that the gospel suffers no disparagement by our discarding the notion of *vicarious punishment*? A notion unworthy of the glorious gospel, and fo-

E

reign

50 HINTS *prefixed to* Mr. MASON'S
reign to it. Our salvation is not
founded on *vicarious punishment*,
but on the *obedience and worthi-
ness* of our blessed and benevo-
lent Saviour. He was obedient
even unto death. And there-
fore, *for his sake*, and *in honour
of him*, penitent sinners, who
return to the path of righteous-
ness, are not only forgiven, but
are admitted into eternal life;
which, whoever enjoys, he re-
ceives it as "the gift of God,
" through Jesus Christ our
" Lord;" who, according to the
wisdom and the grace of God,
lived for us, and died for us;
whose

whose name we ought evermore to honour and bless.

HAVING presented these Hints to the Reader, I do, now, earnestly recommend to him this excellent book: and may the great and good God help him to profit by it!

POSTSCRIPT.

AFTER endeavouring to shew that Mr. M—'s notion of our salvation by Jesus Christ (tho' espoused by many very respectable persons besides himself) is a *mistaken* notion, it seems, on further consideration, *incumbent* on me to express a little more fully what I take to be the scriptural salvation.

It is, in my apprehension, twofold. It consists, first, in that light or instruction which Christ brought into the world, together with the powerful influence

fluence of his sublime example; whereby men are, or may be saved, from ignorance, superstition, folly and wickedness; and whereby they are, or may be made partakers of that happiness, which is derived from genuine religion only:—here, likewise, are included all those illustrious privileges freely bestowed upon professing Christians in common, and intended as *means* of improvement; similar to those conferred upon the Israelites, and intended for the same purpose *. This is properly salvation. In this sense,

* See Taylor on the Romans.

54 POSTSCRIPT.

however, none can receive benefit from Christ, except such as are acquainted with his gospel. But, secondly, the salvation by Christ consists in a *deliverance* of the penitent and sincerely obedient, from the punishment due to their sins; as also in the *acquisition* of eternal life, and blessedness for such persons in the *manner* prescribed by infinite wisdom. And I believe there never was, nor ever will be, any human being unconcerned in this part of the Christian salvation. Now, in *what manner* were this *deliverance* and this *acquisition* effected? By the
obe-

POSTSCRIPT. 55

obedience and *worthiness* of the Son of God. Indeed we are told that " he loved us, and gave " himself for us, an offering " and a sacrifice to God for a " sweet smelling favour:" we are said to " have redemption " through his blood, the for- " giveness of sins:" also we are said to be " redeemed with the " precious blood of Christ, as " of a lamb without blemish, " and without spot, &c. &c."

And I would be very far from intimating, that his most benevolent death is *not* the ground of our salvation. I firmly believe *it is*: and desire always to re-

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member this with the deepest gratitude. But I apprehend it so to be, as it is the *consummation* and *perfection* of his virtue and obedience.

To me it is apparent, from the scripture, that mankind was intended from the beginning to live under the dispensation of grace in Christ Jesus; though the greater part may be ignorant of it. St. Peter saith, “ Christ
 “ was verily foreordained before
 “ the foundation of the world,
 “ but was manifest in these last
 “ times.” John the Baptist stiles him “ the Lamb of God,
 “ which

POSTSCRIPT. 573

“ which taketh away the sins
 “ of the world.” St. Paul tells
 the Galatians, that the gospel
 was preached to Abraham, when
 it was said to him, “ in thy seed
 “ shall all the nations of the
 “ earth be blessed.” He tells
 the Hebrews, that, “ Christ,
 “ by the grace of God, tasted
 “ death for *every man*.” And
 he tells the Romans, that, “ the
 “ grace of God, in Christ, ex-
 “ tends as far as the effects of
 “ Adam’s transgression extend ;”
 (i. e.) to all men without ex-
 ception.

I JUDGE,

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I JUDGE, then, that, before the foundation of the world, our Blessed Saviour, *in concurrence with the scheme formed by eternal wisdom*, determined to descend from Heaven (when the fulness of time should come) wonderfully to humble himself, to take upon him the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross :—hereby designing to accomplish these two ends. First, to instruct, reclaim, and bless mankind by his heavenly doctrine and example : and secondly, to procure most honourable and happy privileges for *some* ;
and

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and for *all*, on their repentance, and sincere obedience, (for *all the sincerely good* in all ages, and in all nations of the world) the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life and blessedness: to procure these benefits for us by *his own obedience*, and more especially by the offering and sacrifice of himself, which was the principal part, and the *consummation* of his obedience; and *on that account*, an offering and a sacrifice of *a sweet smelling savour* to God*. Yet, I apprehend, we
are

* There is no medium. You must either think it so *on that account*, or you
must

50 POSTSCRIPT.

are by no means warranted to think that Christ yielded up his life to a mere *arbitrary command* *. Although he had received no express command to do it, still it would have been a most *virtuous and worthy act* in his circumstances. Thus con-

must think that the great and good God *took delight* in the *penal sufferings* of his *holy, and innocent, and well beloved son*. If this last be your opinion, you are very welcome to it: but, for my part, I cannot think it *favourable* to religion; because it appears to me very *absurd*, and, at the same time, very *shocking*.

* The great God doth *nothing* arbitrarily. Whatever he doth, he doth it—because it is *wisest* and *best*.

sidered,

POSTSCRIPT. 61

sidered, he intended that his death should *avail* (according to God's wise appointment) as a sin-offering for mankind. And we ought evermore to remember, that in his humiliation, and his righteous life, as well as in suffering a most cruel death, and the peculiar distress which attended it, he was mightily influenced by that motive, so interesting to us, his *philantbropy*; properly stiled "*a love that passeth knowledge.*"

THAT the all-perfect Legislator could not, consistently with his attributes and character,

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ter, grant the forgiveness of sins, and other benefits, to the penitent and obedient, *without satisfaction made to justice*, is what no man is authorized to say; because it is evident, that *no* such satisfaction can be made, except by the punishment of the offender. But still it is, also, very plain, that sin ought not to be *lightly* forgiven. Well, then, may we admire and adore the wisdom and grace displayed in the gospel-constitution; which we do not blindly *imagine* to reflect great honour on the divine character; but (blessed be God!) we clearly and assuredly *discern* to

POSTSCRIPT. 69

to be most worthy of him who is the original of all excellence.

We clearly discern that it is highly becoming the divine character, to give a glorious reward to the most perfect *virtue* and *goodness*. And, accordingly, we read in the Epistle to the Philippians, that, “ because Christ
“ [so amazingly] humbled him-
“ self, and became obedient un-
“ to death, therefore [in reward
“ of such *virtue*] God hath
“ highly *exalted* him, and gi-
“ ven him a name above every
“ name: that, at the name of
“ Jesus, every knee should bow,
“ of

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“ of things in heaven, and
 “ things on earth, and things
 “ under the earth; and that
 “ every tongue should confess,
 “ that Jesus Christ is Lord, to
 “ the glory of God the Father.”
 Moreover St. Paul tells the Ephe-
 sians, that their sins are forgiven
 “ for Christ’s sake*.” Now,
 if for the *sake* of Christ, and

* The literal translation is *in Christ*.
 That is, say some, no more than *by the*
gospel. Be it so. Nevertheless, that the
 benefits of the gospel are referred to the
 obedience and worthiness of Christ, is
 sufficiently proved by 2 Cor. v. last ver.
 Heb. ix. and xii. and the reasoning at
 the conclusion of chap. v. of the Epistle
 to the Romans.

in

POSTSCRIPT. 65

in *regard* to him (as so virtuous and so worthy) the sins of men are forgiven, doth he not *hereby* receive great honour? And is not such honour a great reward? We are, likewise, told in the Epistle to the Romans that, "the gift of God is eternal life, *thro'* Jesus Christ our Lord." And, by conferring this most excellent gift, *in such a manner*, the great God doth most eminently glorify his beloved Son, in whom, he is so well pleased. And let it be heedfully observed, that by making the perfect *virtue* and *goodness* of his beloved Son to be the *occasion* of such

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ex-

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excellent benefits to mankind, the great God doth declare to the whole world, and most likely to many other worlds, his high *approbation* of *holiness* and *goodness*: even as he doth declare his great *abhorrence* of *sin*, by making the *transgression* of Adam to be the *occasion* of much calamity to his posterity. Here we may behold how happily this constitution coincides with the constitution of nature, which hath so apparently connected goodness with happiness, and wickedness with misery, that those who say the worst things of nature, cannot deny the connection.

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tion. This coincidence is a good presumptive argument, that the doctrine insisted on above is truly evangelical; and it is as good an argument for the truth of the gospel revelation.——I would wish it further to be duly weighed, that the obedience of Christ being considered as productive of such benefits for us, is likely to be, and assuredly ought to be, a powerful motive with us to practise all obedience with great delight.——These considerations shew the glorious wisdom of the gospel-scheme. It is, indeed, a scheme full of wisdom and benignity. It ought

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to be the subject of our daily meditation, and our daily praise. We can never be thankful enough for its blessings, its privileges, its promises ; nor diligent enough to improve them. But if we endeavour to do this sincerely and constantly, though we should not accomplish all we desire, while we dwell in these frail tabernacles of flesh and blood, yet thus being *truly diligent* to perform that work which is given us to do, we may humbly confide in God as our *heavenly Father*, and rejoice in sure and certain hope, that a happy eternity is before us.

A L E T.

A
L E T T E R
T O T H E

REVEREND MR. D—.

REV. SIR,

AS, of late, I have not attended upon your ministry so constantly as heretofore; and as I have some ground to think that you judge me to be guilty of a fault, in absenting myself, you will permit me to assign a reason in justification of my conduct.

F 3

You

You are very sensible, Sir, that you and I differ very much in our religious opinions; so much, indeed, that I have heard you declare, that a person who thinks as I do, is, on that account, *excluded from salvation*. Such a declaration, however, affects me but little; knowing well, that the great and good God hath never so declared; and therefore esteeming the sentence of any frail and fallible man, as a thing of little moment. Tho', by the way, it seems no trifling affair, with respect to the person himself, who places himself in the seat of judgment, and pronounces

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nounces condemnation on his brother for his opinions. This man had need look well to his authority. And how if, in the end, it should appear that the party so condemned, is one whom God *approves*? But, to return:—The wide difference in our sentiments, of necessity, prevents my gaining that profit from your ministry, which I would heartily wish to gain: and thus the principal design of public worship is defeated. How should I be *profited* by what I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear? By that which the reverence which I owe to the ever blessed

F 4

God

God obliges me to regard with abhorrence? That at which I am really ashamed to be shocked and grieved *no more*; as, indeed, I should be, if I had such a sense of God upon my mind as I ought to have. Yet altho' I think so ill of your tenets, considered in themselves, believing your *sincerity* unquestionable, I do, at the same time, account you a good and a worthy man. Such is every man, who, according to his best judgment, practises what is right and good. Sincerity, Sir, is the *chief thing* in religion. You would think it so in a matter between you and

and your friend. And why not in religion? Because, say you, the great God doth not judge as man judges. Now, as I apprehend this to be a capital mistake, I will examine it a little; and what I shall say of it will be no improper introduction to what follows.

AND surely, if the great God did not judge of good and evil as we judge, he would never have made this appeal to the wicked Israelites. “O house of Israel! are not my ways equal?” “Are not your ways unequal?” —It will be readily granted, that
the

the thoughts and ways of the Deity are, in one respect, far above our thoughts, and our ways. It would be very strange if it were not so. The divine mind seeing the whole compass of truth, and acting even to the extremest bounds of the universe, consequently sees and acts upon reasons unknown to us. But, as all truth is *consistent*, that which is unknown to us cannot be *opposite* and *contradictory* to that which is known. Shall we, then, say we know *nothing*? In this case, would not our own hearts testify the falsity of our assertion? Shall we say

say that human reason was so totally perverted by the fall, that it only deceives us? And shall we *prove* this too? But how? Shall we prove by *reason* that reason is *deceitful*? The attempt has often been made: but certainly no absurdity can be more gross. Shall we prove it by scripture? But suppose we are asked, “ have you any good “ *reason* to think the genuine “ sense of scripture is such?” What shall we answer? If we say *no*; in this case will not our consciences condemn us, for *receiving* such doctrine as the genuine sense of scripture? If we say

say *yes*; is it not, then, manifest that, in judging of the sense of scripture, we are determined by *reason*? And thus is it not manifest, that the scriptural proof of *reason's* *deceitfulness*, is ultimately derived from *deceitful reason itself*? It is undeniably: and consequently such proof is *deceitful proof*, and cannot be depended upon. If we *do* depend upon it, in so doing we declare that *reason* is *not* deceitful, in direct opposition to the very tenet which we were intending to establish. Pray attend to this. Indeed, Sir, it is very melancholy, to consider how men have
con-

confounded and perverted a reasonable nature. However, notwithstanding all that has been urged to the contrary, it is abundantly evident, that we are endowed with capacities *to judge* aright, (within certain limits) even as the great God himself judges, concerning good and evil *. It is true, we may *incapacitate* ourselves, and then put the one for the other; and it seems *too true*, that this has

* Your contrary belief seems to have no other support than the notion of *the deceitfulness of human reason*, resulting from the fall, which notion has *nothing* 1 Cor 2.14. to support it.

been

been done by all who have persuaded themselves that human reason, as such, is totally perverted; so as to be quite unable to judge concerning good and evil, or things of a religious nature.

THUS much, Sir, being premised, I now beg leave to mention those doctrines of yours, to which I principally object, and the ground of my objections. The doctrines are, that of the Trinity, according to Athanasius; the doctrine of original sin; the doctrine of election and reprobation; the doctrine
of

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of the satisfaction, and that of imputed righteousness.

THE doctrine of the Trinity, as Athanasius and you represent it, appears to me utterly *absurd* and *contradictory*: because you represent the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as three separate *agents*, each of them *God*, each of them *infinite*: and yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. You will not, surely, say the Father, Son, and Spirit, are *not* three separate *agents*; when, at the same time, you assert, that the Father *sent* the Son into the world, who, in
con-

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consequence of being so sent,
came into the world, and *did* and
suffered what is recorded of him :
when, at the same time, you
assert also, that the Father *sent*
the Spirit *in the name of the Son*,
and that the Spirit, in conse-
quence of being so sent, *came*
into the world, and *convinced*
mankind of sin, &c. Surely,
Sir, you will not say that the
sender and the *sent*, he who *com-*
mands, and he who *obeys*, are
not separate agents, but the
same *. Here, then, are three
agents,

* Whenever you declare the Son and
Spirit to be *equal* with the Father, you
do,

agents, each of whom you affirm to be infinite, each of whom you affirm to be God, and to each of whom, as to the Lord your God, you pay divine worship. Yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. And you say well : but you miserably *contradict* yourself : (and however good your intention may be) you greatly *dishonour* the eternal Deity, who is *one infinite agent*.

do, in the very terms, acknowledge that their *existence* is *separate* from the Father's *existence*. You always conceive of things as *existing separately*, when you think of their *equality* : you cannot help it if you would. But you may *impose* upon yourself.

G

THE

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THE doctrine of original sin, (according to you, Sir) seems to consist of two parts:—In the first place, *guilt* derived from Adam's transgression upon all his posterity, whereby they are brought under the wrath and curse of God, and are made liable to the torments of Hell for ever*:—and, secondly, *the total*

* I believe, Sir, this is a true representation of this part of your doctrine, which, indeed, you do not very much insist upon: but I beg leave to enquire, why do you not? Why dont you preach several entire sermons to ascertain, illustrate, and enforce it; that so your hearers may know the value of it, being convinced

total corruption of their nature ; which is such, that it renders them sinners by nature, and dead in trespasses and sins ; so dead, that they are no more able to do any thing truly good, than a dead corpse is able to arise and walk.

WITH respect to the first of these articles, I would observe, that, if we know any thing

vinced how worthy it is of *the infinitely good God* to torment the posterity of Adam in hell fire for ever, not for *their own*, but for *Adam's* transgression ? For my part, I think you are obliged in conscience thus to do, as you often profess that you account it your duty to declare *the whole counsel of God.*

whatsoever, we know that it is *not just* to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*. If it be asked, "How do you know this?" In return, I ask, how do you know that there is any thing *wrong*, or *inconsistent with justice*, in oppressions, murders, massacres, perjuries, blasphemies? Suppose any one should affirm that these things are very *innocent*. If you thought he deserved any notice, I doubt not you would eagerly contradict him. Yet you could not do it without shewing your inconsistency: for that same reason which declares these things to be *essentially unjust*, is equally clear,

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clear, full, and positive in declaring the *injustice* of punishing *one* man for the sin of *another*.

If this be *right*, there is not the shadow of a reason for thinking those horrid crimes to be *really criminal*. But we *know assuredly*

that oppressions, murders, massacres, perjuries, blasphemies, are really and essentially *criminal*: and, in the same manner, and, with equal certainty, we know that to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*, neither *is*, nor *can* be just*. And, therefore,

* I have heard you say, Sir,—you do not believe that infants are sent into Hell.

G 3

But

fore, most sincerely do I *abhor* the doctrine, which ascribes such

But if they are *punishable* for the sin of their first father, and if they are *actually punished* in some degree, why should they not receive *the full punishment* which is due to them? And why was it, when we were talking of this matter, that you seemed *unwilling* to be thought a believer in the damnation of infants? I apprehend you were shocked [for you *started*] at the impious tenet. It was well. The great God intended you should be shocked: and not at this tenet only, but also at several others which you believe and promulge. Indeed, he doth permit it to be otherwise. He endowed us with *liberty* (*i. e.* freedom of will) that we might be *accountable*. I would just take notice, here, that if we have *no liberty*,
if

such a conduct to that righteous Being, whom I would always venerate and adore.

WITH respect to the second article in this doctrine, (viz.)

if nothing but actual sin can proceed from our nature, as nothing but an impure stream can proceed from an impure fountain; then are actual sinners (as you term them) and infants, upon the very same footing, in respect of guilt: for these last were just as able to *prevent* the sin of their *first father*, as the others were to *prevent* what you term *their own* actual sins. I cannot give them that name; because as actual sin cannot subsist without *agency*, so neither without *liberty* can agency possibly subsist.

the entire *corruption* of the human nature, whereby men are rendered *sinners by nature*, and utterly *incapacitated* to do any thing which is *truly good*: I would observe, that, if we consider what sin *is*, it will be found a contradiction to say a man is a *sinner by nature*. You may as well say that it is sinful for a man to have two *hands*, or two *feet*, as to say it is sinful for him to have human *passions*, or any thing else which belongs to him as a man. But then may sin be charged upon him, when he has knowingly and wilfully *done* the evil which he might have avoided,

ed, or *omitted* to do the good which he might have done. Till you can affirm either one or the other of him, you have no authority to call him a sinner. And when, through his negligence or bad conduct, he has *corrupted* himself, and *acquired evil habits*, you may say he is a sinful and a wicked creature then, and not before. If this be the true account of sin and sinfulness, a *sinful nature*, as such, is plainly a contradiction. And can you, Sir, prove that it is *not* the true account? If you can, I really think there is nothing too hard for you.

BUT

BUT even though it were not *impossible in itself*, that the human nature, as such, should be morally corrupt and sinful; yet, as it is *the work of God*, it must certainly be pure from all sinful stain. You will tell me, perhaps, that it is *not* the work of God: but surely all nature, without exception, is his work. However, you insist upon it, that the first man corrupted himself, and all those who descend from him in the course of nature. But what, I beseech you, is the course of nature? Without God, it is *nothing*. By the powerful will of God all things were

were made : and that will is as needful for their *preservation*, as it was for their *production*.

“ Hitherto the Almighty work-
 “ eth:” his energy is felt through-
 out the universe, and the course
 of nature is the *effect* of that ener-
 gy. Summer and winter, seed-
 time and harvest, the successive
 generations of plants and ani-
 mals, with all the infinite variety
 of events which take place in
 the natural world—All these are
 the *result* of that divine opera-
 tion which never ceases. Adam
 could never have left any poste-
 rity, if he had not been *empow-
 ered* by the will of God to pro-
 pagate

pagate his species. If, then, he communicated *a sinful nature* to his children, he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*. The truth is, every child receives its being and its nature from God, who conveys it by the instrumentality* of the parents; and the

* If a man have done an action which is sinful, it cannot be denied that he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*: yet surely he dares not affirm, that, with respect to this sinful action, he was *nothing more* than the instrument in God's hand. It *depends* on a man, whether the nature of his actions shall be sinful or otherwise. It depends *not* on him, whether the nature of his children shall be sinful or otherwise. The nature of his
action

the divine energy is as much concerned in producing the nature of every child which is born, as it was in producing the nature of the first man. Suppose this energy to *cease*, and you certainly cannot imagine the course of nature to *continue*. Seeing, then, the human nature is *the work of God*, it *cannot* be a sinful nature. And it is worthy of your consideration, Sir, that the Bible tells us it is *the express will of God*, that the human nature should be *such as it is*: because action is *his own work*; the nature of his child is *God's work*. it

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it acquaints us, that, *after the flood*, this command was delivered, "be fruitful and multiply."

THE doctrine of election and reprobation asserts, that, while a small part of mankind was, from eternity, *predestinated* to enjoy everlasting happiness in the heavenly world, the greater part by far was also *predestinated*, by the same gracious God, to suffer everlasting torments in hell fire.

THAT any man, whose understanding is not entirely *ruined*, should believe this doctrine, would

would be to me a matter of the greatest astonishment, if I were not yet more astonished to think, that it is believed by some who do really venerate their Maker. If it doth not carry its own refutation along with it, it must be owned there is little hope of its being refuted. However, I would observe two things in relation to it. First, that if any one were about to utter the most horrid blasphemy against the ever blessed God, he would be put to it to invent any thing worse, *in kind*, than what is contained in this doctrine. Should he take the hint from it to affirm,

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firm, that God *predestinated* all the creatures which he *hath* made, or in future *will* make, to suffer *everlasting* torments: this would be only a greater *degree* of the same *kind* of blasphemy. In the next place, I would take notice, that, when you say, “al-
“ though the great God hath,
“ prior to their existence, *pre-*
“ *destinated* and *decreed* the great-
“ est part of mankind to suffer
“ everlasting torments in Hell,
“ he is, nevertheless, infinitely
“ good and gracious.” I have good reason to think, that your heart recoils, and flatly *denies* what you utter with your tongue, tho’
you

REVEREND MR. D——. 67

you *strive hard* to believe it. I ask you, seriously, Sir, is not such the fact? And do not you impute it to *the natural wickedness* of your heart? I have no desire that you should answer me: but you will not do amiss, perhaps, in delivering your answer to him who *made you*, and made you *what you are*; that you might naturally *shudder* at this horrid tenet, as you naturally *shudder* at the most atrocious and shocking crimes.

THE doctrine of the satisfaction is this; that Christ died *in the room and stead* of sinners,

H

suf-

98. A LETTER TO THE
suffering a punishment equivalent to what was due to them, and thereby satisfied the law and justice of God. Now what do we understand by these words, punishment, law, justice? *Pain* and *punishment* seem to be very different things. The brute animals *suffer*, but are *not* punished: for then, only, is a being punished, when he *suffers for sin charged upon him*. Law, in the present case, I take to be an *authoritative edict*, prescribing to, and enjoining upon *its own subjects* right conduct, and denouncing a penalty against disobedience. Justice is the same

as righteousness; it is eternal and immutable. Whatever is just and right, is such in its own nature, it was always such, and such it must remain for ever. Likewise, whatever is unjust and wrong, is so in itself, eternally and immutably. The great God, who is omniscient, knows *all* that is right or wrong: and he, of his abundant goodness, hath made us capable of the same knowledge, *as far as is needful and proper for us.* He hath made us thus capable, in that he hath made us reasonable beings. As such, we understand and know, that, to practice obedi-

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ence to our Maker's will, is
right. We understand and know,
it is *right* for a child, who has
it in his power, to relieve and
support an aged parent in dis-
tress. And if a person return
evil for good, we understand
and know this to be *wrong*.
And whatever it be which rea-
son pronounces, with the same
clearness, to be either just or
unjust, *such it is*. Every man
must grant this, unless he will
grant—he has *no reason* to think
that to be just or unjust, which
yet he *does* think to be so: I
mean every man who allows the
existence of justice and injustice.

There

There was always a righteousness proper for every rational being existing, or designed to exist. This the ever blessed Deity saw, and contemplated from everlasting. This is what I understand by eternal and immutable justice. It is founded on the *circumstances* and *relations* of beings. To instance among ourselves of the human race:—Should a man be either a father or a son, his being so related as he is, makes it just and right for him to do what does not belong to a person who is without children, or who has lost his parents. So riches, knowledge,

wit, and power, make a certain conduct to be just and right for their several possessors, which *cannot* be right for persons *differently circumstanced*. We have now, I believe, got the true meaning of the terms in question. But if law be such as hath been said, how shall its demands be satisfied? It is exceeding plain, that they never can otherwise than by *a compliance* with what is demanded. The law requires of *its own subjects* this alternative, “*obey, or suffer the penalty.*” Now, in either case, there is *compliance*, and, consequently, *satisfaction*.

But

But if they neither *obey* nor *suffer the penalty*, there is *no compliance*, and, consequently, *no satisfaction*. It signifies nothing to say, that some person obeyed *in their stead*, or suffered *in their stead*. Neither the obedience nor the suffering of this person is what the law demands: each is *something else*: it is *no compliance*, and therefore *cannot be satisfaction*. If you were to require *one thing* of me, and I were to give you *another*, it could never be said that I had *satisfied your demand*. You, indeed, may be satisfied with something different from what you

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required: *you* may be changed.
But, if the *law* be changed, it
will not be the law which we
are considering. Indeed, it was
never supposed to be changed,—
It should be remembered, how-
ever, that nothing can be more
extravagant, than to affirm any
law to be *satisfied*, while its de-
mands remain *unsatisfied*: and
that these can only be satisfied
by a *compliance* with what is de-
manded: and that, as the obe-
dience and sufferings of Christ
are *no such* compliance with what
the law of God demands, (which
is the obedience or suffering of
its own subjects) therefore Christ

hath

but not satisfied the law of God,
in the room and stead of sinners.

AND that justice cannot be satisfied by the vicarious punishment of an innocent person, is sufficiently evident from this one consideration—that justice absolutely *forbids* to punish the innocent. This you acknowledge, when you say (in regard to sickness and pain) that infants would not be *punished*, if they were not *guilty*. However, you say, that as Christ *consented* to endure punishment, that *consent* rendered him *in justice punishable*. Did it then *take away* his
inno-

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innocence? Did it render him
properly *criminal*? If not, *how*
then could it make him *punishable*? Will you affirm, that it is
in the *nature* of such consent so
to do? And that *any* one who
consents to be punished, is *punishable in justice*? Sure you will
not. But if you do, I must con-
tradict you, and declare, that a
being is *not* punishable on ac-
count of his *consent*, but only
on account of his *crime*. It is
really wonderful, that people
should imagine justice might be
satisfied by what is a *violation* of
justice.

WITH

WITH respect to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, (viz.) that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, so as to become *their* righteousness;—I would observe, that to impute or reckon to me what is not mine, is *wrong* imputation, or *wrong* reckoning; it is declaring a thing *to be* what it *is not*. Moreover, it is impossible to make that right conduct *which I never performed*, to become *truly mine*, merely by *declaring* it so to be. Suppose a person in great affliction be by some other person relieved, and made easy and happy; and suppose it should

should be generally reported, that you relieved this distressed person, when you are conscious that you have *not* done it. It is then imputed and reckoned to you : but it is a *wrong* imputation ; and it is plainly and utterly impossible that this *deed* should become *your* deed. Let who will *declare* it so to be, the matter is not altered hereby ; and such declaration must inevitably be *untrue*. There are some who understand this doctrine somewhat differently from what I have defined it to be ; but you, Sir, I think, do not. Indeed, I take yours to be the true and proper

proper idea of the doctrine: for, if a person *only derive benefit* from Christ's righteousness, there is *no* imputation in the case*.

I REALLY shudder to reflect on the counterpart of this doctrine. The imputation of the sins of men to the blessed Son of God. But if you be a consistent believer in imputed righteousness, you *must* believe in such

* You believe (if I do not misunderstand you) that if a man be *approved* of God, it is not on account of *his own righteousness*, but on account of *the righteousness of Christ*, with which the man is *adorned*, as with a glorious robe.

impu-

N¹⁰ A LETTER TO THE

imputation of sins. Indeed, I hope you are not consistent; for, if you be, you can have no objection to that horrid assertion, which I dare say you are not unacquainted with (*viz.*) That the great God turned away his face from his expiring Son as from *an abominable object*. This tenet is by no means compatible with the idea of the *innocent* enduring punishment instead of the *guilty*: but I am not surprized at the inconsistency.

YET all these doctrines, you think, are warranted by the word of God. And do you really think,

REVEREND MR. D—— 111

think, Sir, that the sacred word can warrant such doctrines as these? I think myself well authorised to declare them absurd, impossible, impious—and, therefore, *false*. If you deny the charge, you should prove the contrary: which if you do, you will perform great and eminent service for the cause in which you are embarked. Till this is effected, either by you or somebody else, I must think it is not doing the word of God much real honour, to say, as you do, that these doctrines are not only warranted by it, but are the principal and most excellent doctrines

112 A LETTER TO THE

trines which it delivers to us. I sincerely bless God, that he hath taught me to put a much better, and a more natural interpretation upon his word, which has been lamentably obscured by the glosses of both ill-meaning and well-meaning persons. And, as I esteem the revelation which God has given us in the scriptures to be an invaluable treasure, I am very sorry to see it so sadly perverted, as to be made to countenance opinions which are a reproach to religion. Such opinions (pardon me, Sir) I must hear, and little else, if I attend upon your
ministry

ministry. I must hear the most unworthy and degrading representations of the glorious Deity, and, what is still worse, I must hear injustice and cruelty charged indirectly upon him who is perfectly just and infinitely benevolent. I must hear another, represented as *equal* to him who is declared to be “ the ONLY true “ God ;” and who himself hath, in his own person, said— “ I am God, and there is none “ else.” I must hear prayers, (in which I would not join for the whole world) wherein penitent confession is made to him who created and formed us of a *sin-*

I *ful*

ful nature, and a heart naturally full of wickedness: I must hear this confession, instead of a devout thanksgiving for those intelligent and moral faculties, whereby we are made capable of religious and heavenly felicity. And I must hear praise and thanks ascribed to the ever blessed God, for satisfying justice by that which his soul must utterly abhor——by *the punishment* of his holy, and innocent, and beloved son, &c. &c. Sir, I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear these things.

I HAVE

REVEREND MR. D——. 115

I HAVE a little more to add, and I have done. I cannot help observing a very remarkable difference between your preaching, and that of many whose principles are a good deal similar to your own. These persons judging, that although men are naturally corrupt, they are *moral agents* still; and judging, moreover, that the gospel hath revealed nothing more plainly than this truth:—"That the present state is a state of *trial* and *discipline*, having respect to another state, where we are to be dealt with, according to our behaviour in this."—They

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do generally explain and enforce those *duties* which are required of us, insisting on the various arguments and motives drawn from the nature of things, as well as those peculiar to the gospel. Now, it is true, Sir, I have heard you acknowledge, that the present state is a state of *trial*; but your preaching totally *excludes* this truth: for you deny the moral agency of mankind; affirming, that men are no more able to do any thing *truly good*, than a dead *corpse* is able to arise and walk; and one great part of your business is to describe the *misery* and *sinfulness* of
of

of this which you call our *natural state*. Instead of counselling your hearers (as was the apostle Paul's manner) to "labour that they may be accepted of God: because we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" you tell them that, if they have the smallest portion of *true grace*, (which you aver to be sovereign, *i. e.* arbitrary) they shall certainly be saved: but if they are never so happy as to be

made partakers of this *grace* (which, being sovereign, doth not at all depend upon any thing they can do) they must inevitably be lost. That is—those who are lost, are lost *for want of grace*; and not because they *did* the evil which they *might have avoided*, and *omitted* to do the good which they *might have done* *. You tell them, further, that they must never expect to *recommend* themselves to

* You may possibly say, with some, that wicked men can abstain from evil, and do good, if they *will*; while yet you affirm they *cannot* will. But surely a man cannot *do* what he cannot *will* to do. To tell him he can, is to insult him.

God

God by any thing they can perform. A piece of doctrine which doth not seem to correspond very well, either with the passage just quoted, or with the exhortation of the same apostle, addressed to the Thessalonians, as follows——“ We beseech you,
 “ brethren, and exhort you by
 “ the Lord Jesus, that as ye
 “ have received of us how ye
 “ ought to walk, and to *please*
 “ God, so ye would abound
 “ more and more.” And yet it must be owned, that you express great disapprobation of the conduct of such as think to be accepted of God, *without* the

120 A LETTER TO THE
practice of what is good. I look
upon this as a very *happy* incon-
sistency, resulting from the prin-
ciples of that nature, which,
(however you may depreciate and
vilify it) is *the excellent work-*
manship of God, his rich and
invaluable gift.

A MANNER of preaching so
very opposite to this leading doc-
trine of the gospel—that we shall
be dealt with according to our
behaviour in the present state of
trial and *discipline*—appears to
me so contrary to the intention
of preaching, that it is not like-
ly I should receive much benefit
from

from it : especially it is not likely as I consider it liable to the preceding objections.

AND now, Sir, I have given you my reasons for non-attendance upon your ministry. It is not because I have a *dislike* to public worship. So far from it, I cannot help thinking it a misfortune to be thus debarred from what I esteem a great and desirable privilege. I should rejoice to join with my fellow-Christians in such worship as I think agreeable to the true spirit of Christianity : but, were I to join with *you*, I should, in *ma-*
ny

122 A LETTER TO THE

ny instances, wrong my conscience: and, in barely giving attendance, I cannot avoid being *hurt*, more or less, by what I hear. When I do attend, I endeavour to make the most of what I approve, join in the worship where I *can*, and pay a particular regard to your sincerity and upright meaning. If it should be asked, why I attended constantly so long; I did it, because I was afraid of setting a bad example, or rather what might be so construed. But, on further consideration, there seems no great reason to fear this, as it is well known, that

REVEREND MR. D—. 123

that I do not make the day a day
of *pleasure*: and I hope, and
am persuaded, that my absence
is not suspected to proceed from
a disregard to religion.

IN this letter, Sir, I have not
scrupled to declare my senti-
ments of your opinions with a
great deal of *frankness*: you
may possibly think, *too much*.
But the case required it. And
I doubt not you would have been
as free with my principles, if
you had wrote to me on the sub-
ject.—I had in view the ho-
nour of God, and the Christian
religion, as well as the justifica-
tion

tion of my own conduct. I assure you, that I neither intended, nor do intend, any thing like hostility: for, however much I may think you *mistaken*, as a man I esteem and respect you; and have not designedly failed to *shew* my respect upon proper occasions, when you were either present or absent. I now beg leave to offer you my best wishes, and subscribe myself,

Reverend Sir,

Your real friend,

And very humble servant,

AN

AN
ESSAY
ON
PRIDE.

WE define pride, *an inordinate self-esteem*. This definition, I believe, is generally allowed. It seems properly to characterize every species of this vice. One man esteems himself on account of his birth, another values himself upon his riches, a third upon his understanding,

standing, a fourth upon his knowledge. Now all these are proud men : because they esteem themselves on account of that which *does not merit* esteem. *Esteem belongs only to virtue.* Some very intelligent and knowing persons have persuaded themselves otherwise, and perhaps may be very unwilling to relinquish their persuasion. They will readily grant, that no merit belongs to the rich man, nor any to the man of family : but to say there belongs none to an exalted understanding, able accurately to investigate truth, to penetrate the recesses of nature,

to

to project and to accomplish mighty schemes; to say there belongs none to a mind adorned with the acquisitions of science and polite learning——this you will not easily prevail on them to say. It may be, there is a very powerful argument why they should not be prevailed on. It may be, in so saying, they would reproach themselves, as having little or no merit, when they have long imagined they had a great deal. Be that as it may, to a candid mind (I doubt not) the position I have laid down will appear to be well founded. Whatever excellence resides in a
fine

fine understanding, it is but *natural* excellence; and therefore, though in other respects *different*, in this the *same*, as what we discern in a graceful or beautiful *figure*; which may belong either to the human species, or to brute animals, or to things inanimate. It is true, there are some weak people, who imagine they have merit on account of external personal beauty; but no man was ever weak enough to fancy that merit ought to be attributed to those beautiful and graceful *inanimate* objects which Nature presents to our eyes. If we enquire, wherein lies the absurdity
of

of attributing merit to these? The answer is; it is absurd to attribute merit to any creature, on account of *natural excellence**. It follows, that no merit belongs to a man for the goodness of his understanding; and that whoever values himself upon this score, is a *proud man*. He certainly esteems himself more than he ought, for, in this instance, his self-esteem is founded upon *nothing* †. And that knowledge,

* This will teach us what to think of mere *constitutional temper*.

† What is here said, relates only to that portion of understanding which we
K receive

ledge, considered by itself, doth not confer merit, appears from hence: that it is the *motive* which gives an action its natural colour. I labour to acquire knowledge*: and herein I do well, if my motive be good; if bad, I do otherwise than well. Howbeit, I acquire knowledge, and of consequence merit, according to some. But whatever

receive from Nature. The reasoning that follows concerning knowledge, will equally apply to an *improved understanding*.

* The knowledge we get by *chance*, can never give us merit: we may full as reasonably think, that, among other strange chances, merit may accidentally belong to a *tree* or a *cloud*.

we merit, we surely cannot merit *esteem* by doing *ill*. If we labour to acquire knowledge from a wish to promote virtue, and virtuous happiness in ourselves and others, our motive is good, and our knowledge will imply merit*. If our motive be the love of knowledge, for its own sake, this motive is but specious. If our motive be the desire of making a parade in scientific ornaments, while our foolish fellow-creatures look on and wonder at our finery, it is plainly a bad motive: and the

* Not in itself, but as a virtuous acquisition.

question will be, what is our *demerit*? I fear it is truer than I wish, that the two last motives operate much more generally than the first: yet truth requires me (and I readily comply) to say that the last seldom, if ever, operates alone.

To every ingenuous person who is disposed to think *the love of knowledge for its own sake* somewhat better than a specious motive, I would beg leave to offer the following questions. Whether it be not impossible, that merit should belong to a person *destitute* of all virtue? Whether
virtue

virtue ought not to influence our conduct *particularly* in articles of importance? * Whether, if our conduct be *not* influenced by virtue in every such important article we be not *criminal*? † And, whether a course of study and observation in pursuit of knowledge, be not such an im-

* The good man is the disciple of *wisdom* and *virtue*. In general, *they* consecrate his actions, his enjoyments, his sufferings. To *them* he hath resigned himself: and he is under their influence, even when he doth not advert to it.

† We are informed by the most *respectable* authority, that, “to him that *knoweth* to do good, and doth it not—
“to him it is *sin*.”

portant article of conduct? Each of these questions, I apprehend, must receive an affirmative answer. And if so, it not only follows, that mere knowledge *cannot* confer merit, — but also, that those who have imagined it could, have been absurd enough to suppose, we might derive merit from that very thing, which, independent of virtuous principle, necessarily implies *criminality*.

It should seem then to be the voice of truth, *that esteem belongs only to virtue*. And, that those who value themselves on their

their understanding, or their knowledge, are chargeable with *inordinate self-esteem*, which is neither more nor less than *Pride*. Indeed it has been to me a matter of great wonder, so frequently to see understanding, genius, and science, placed in the same rank with *moral excellence*.

But, if it be a mark of pride to attribute merit to ourselves, on account of any qualifications which are not of a moral nature, the *over-rating* these, at the same time, is a mark of additional pride: for we are guilty of this vice, when we esteem our *real*

merits as being greater than they are *. Indeed, I am afraid the
quan-

* Merit is a word, which, in the ears of some people, sounds very harsh. It is very certain, however, that virtue and merit cannot be separated; and very remarkable, that some who cannot bear to hear merit attributed to any, will yet affirm, without hesitation, that several of their friends are very WORTHY men. Strange! that persons should be the dupes of such a palpable delusion. Is there no one on earth whom you *esteem*? More than one, I doubt not. And do they not *merit* it? If not, *why* then do you entertain such a respect for them? I must beg leave to say, *you could not do this*, if you *thought* they did not merit it. And let it be observed, we are often told in scripture, that the great God approves
the

quantity of virtue and merit in the world will appear to be much

the virtue of good men. To mention only two instances. The apostle Peter says in his first epistle, that patiently to suffer wrong for well doing, is *thank-worthy*, and *acceptable* with God. And Paul advises the Hebrews to do good, and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is *well-pleased*. Now I would hope there are but few, if any, so presumptuous as to say, that the all-perfect Deity approves of what *doth not deserve* his approbation. Every being merits esteem in proportion to his virtue. But I would not be misunderstood. Although the good man be *approved* of God on account of his virtue, he *doth not*, he *cannot* merit eternal life. This is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

less

less than is apprehended, when we consider, that in judging of virtue, we must entirely subtract all that which (though called virtue) owes its birth to the mechanical influence of *instinct*, and *happy circumstances*. The very essence of virtue is *wise and virtuous choice*. But where there is little or nothing of this, it is possible that very plausible things may be done, and very plausible habits acquired. A consideration (by the way) which ought to prevail on us resolutely to choose, and steadily to persevere in a course of *active and generous* good-

godness:—and to beware of too much self-ascription.

THERE is another kind of pride, which is considered by all as extremely base and odious: that which induces a person to behave with *haughtiness* and *insolence* to his neighbour, who happens to be inferior to him in fortune, or parts, or knowledge, tho' perhaps superior in worth. This kind of pride is indeed so hateful, that one would wonder a man could be guilty of it, were there not so many, and such shameful instances. It is an enormity of the largest size;
and

and full of criminal madness. It supposes a man to esteem himself possessed of so much *excellence*, as warrants him to *trample upon*, and *wound* his neighbour, merely because he is imagined, by this proud wretch, to *want* the excellence which himself possesses. It is not so great pride for a man to make himself a God*.

WHO-

* It scarcely admits of a doubt, which is the proudest man; he who imagines himself possessed of sufficient merit to render him a suitable object of that homage, which was paid by the antients to inferior Gods, or heroes; or he who imagines he has merit enough to justify his arbitrary

WHOEVER is guilty of insult, makes his pride abundantly evident. But one may have the misfortune to be called proud, without meriting such a censure. It may be a clear case, that a man has a better understanding, and knows more than some persons with whom he converses. Is it, then, pride in him to think so? Surely no. Or should he refuse to acquiesce in their

arbitrary infliction of *pain* and *misery*. It is probable that most, if not all, of those who, in antient time, were guilty of the first instance of pride, were also guilty of the last. But it is plain, that the instances are distinct: and, I think, as plain that they are not equally base.

opinion,

opinion, preferring his own, is it pride so to do? They may very likely think it is, and say it is, yet they may be mistaken, and their censure consequently unmerited. He may take to himself no more than what properly belongs to him.

MANY reckon it an undeniable proof of pride, if a person shew an impatience of contradiction, though it be impertinent: or if he appear very sensible of unkind and injurious treatment. These marks, indeed, may prove him a defective philosopher, not having that
dominion

dominion over his temper which is devoutly to be wished: but how do they prove him chargeable with *inordinate self-esteem*? A quick sensibility of unkind and injurious treatment, seems to me to intimate nothing like it. Nobody thinks it a mark of pride, to feel pain when we receive a blow. It results from the constitution of our nature. Now it is obvious, that, on the very same account, the mind is affected, more or less, with all unkind and injurious treatment. If natural sensibility be encreased by pride, it must be thus. The man imagines himself to have
more

more *merit* than he has in reality, and supposing the injury he receives to be great in proportion to his *imaginary worth*, he feels accordingly: and besides this, perhaps, he is hurt by an injury which has no existence, but in his proud imagination. A character that occurs too frequently. But it will never follow, that whoever is very sensible of wrong done him, is guilty of pride. Nature has given much more exquisite feelings to some men, than to others: and unkindness and injury received (perhaps from a quarter whence we had a right to expect something very different)

different) may have rendered natural feelings more exquisite. Yet as it is the duty of every man, so it is the practice of every good man, *to rule his temper.*

With respect to an impatience of contradiction :—wrong is done, when contradiction is impertinent. And it seems, the not suffering wrong with perfect patience, is no certain proof of pride. Nor is it, perhaps, if a man be impatient, when contradicted upon sufficient ground.

It is true, he *may* think himself a person of so much importance, as that his opinion ought not to be questioned. And it *may* be,

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though

though there was room for contradiction, it was accompanied with a saucy and impertinent *manner*, which affected him a little painfully. And it *may* be, also, that, after a great deal of labour to obtain truth, he is *grieved* to find he is obliged to suspect himself in an error. And, although the case should include both these last articles, it is very evident the man might not be proud.

IT should seem, then, to be true, that a man may think he has a better understanding, and more knowledge than some persons;

sons; that he may prefer his own judgment to theirs; that he may shew impatience when contradicted; that he may discover much sensibility of unkind and injurious treatment;—and yet be chargeable with *no pride*: though it is exceeding probable it will be laid to his charge; for these are marks, which many people think to exhibit undeniable proof.

WOULD we be honest to ourselves, we have much more opportunity to know our own character, than any other person can have. And *self-knowledge*

is our indispensible duty. Without it, we can neither have virtue nor happiness. But much of it is not to be acquired without diligent and constant attention. And our self-love being so liable to put a bias on our judgment, we ought to proceed with great sobriety and caution. Now if, on due consideration, we think our character to be *sincerely good*, we surely shall think, too, that we must have been greatly, and *inevitably* influenced by *instinctive principles*, and *advantageous circumstances*. Let this keep us *humble*. And, instead of thinking how great our *merit* is, we should

should do better, perhaps, to think how great is our *happiness*, encouraging ourselves to make farther progress daily in the paths of WISDOM : for “all her paths are peace.” But, if we consider ourselves properly, it will be very extraordinary, if we find not many shameful weaknesses, many faults. As another means of promoting *humility*, let us keep our eye much upon these. WISDOM will inform us, that they tarnish and injure our character, and that they are enemies to our happiness. Happy, indeed, were it for us, would we

hear and obey her voice ; for her
voice is the voice of Heaven.

‘ O ye children of men !
‘ (saith she) would ye be blest
‘ with real delight, exert your-
‘ selves to remove these faults, to
‘ conquer these weakneses : and,
‘ with the utmost diligence, O
‘ cultivate those amiable vir-
‘ tues, which render ye like
‘ your glorious Maker. But ye
‘ complain of *natural frailty*.
‘ True, ye are frail. Yet know
‘ ye not, ye to whom the ETER-
‘ NAL FATHER hath spoken !
‘ Know ye not, that he hath
‘ promised to his frail offspring
‘ gra-

ON PRIDE. 151

' graciously to confirm them for
 ' the work of righteousness, and
 ' most liberally to bestow on his
 ' dutiful children, that bliss
 ' which eye hath not seen, which
 ' ear hath not heard, which the
 ' mind of man cannot conceive?
 ' Harken to my words, O mor-
 ' tals greatly beloved! I am de-
 ' legated to speak to you by the
 ' benignant PARENT OF NA-
 ' TURE. Earnestly then, and
 ' with humility, entreat *his*
 ' blessing; confide in *him* en-
 ' tirely; gratefully, chearfully,
 ' joyfully obey *him*: and never,
 ' never forget that " God is
 " LOVE, and he that dwelleth
 L 4 in

“ in love, dwelleth in God, and
 ‘ God in him.” So shall ye attain
 ‘ the end of your being, which
 ‘ is VIRTUOUS HAPPINESS.
 ‘ And assuredly ye will remem-
 ‘ ber concerning *pride*, that it
 ‘ *was not made for man.*’

MEDI.

MEDITATION

O N

DIVINE LOVE.

“ **W**E love him (saith John,
“ the excellent apostle)
“ because he first loved us.” In-
deed to his, even to our hea-
venly Father’s infinite love, we are
indebted for the *capacity* of lov-
ing any thing. How, then, can
our thoughts be so well employ-
ed, or so happily, as in confi-
dering the invaluable instances
of divine love toward us. Such
a contemplation will enlarge the
mind ;

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mind; it will delight the heart with the sweet sentiments of gratitude, and with that sublime joy which (if not strangely depraved) we must needs derive from the view of *original excellence and goodness*. And O the happiness of that man, who, thus “ beholding the glory of “ the Lord is transformed into “ his image!”

LET us consider the earth on which we dwell. It is a mighty globe, which strikes us at first with that variety of ornament which it wears upon its surface. Sea and firm land, mountains, plains

DIVINE LOVE. 155

plains and rivers, woods and vales, herbage, and fruits, and blooms, are objects exceeding pleasant to the imagination. But it is a nobler pleasure we are conscious of, when contemplating the general frame of the world, or the structure of particular parts, or the harmony of the several parts with one another, we discover (though imperfectly) the DIVINE WISDOM. And who is there among men, that are strangers to science, who is there even of these that perceives not the glorious and never ceasing operation, whereby such immense quantities of the watery element

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element are raised from the great deep, suspended in the atmosphere, thus conveyed round the globe, and so graciously distributed to every region, as not to *drown*, but to *fertilize* it? Who of these perceives not the *operation* whereby either the earth or the heaven is rolled round, every day, for the refreshment, and indeed for the life of the animal and vegetable creation? Or that *order*, from whence comes the circle of the changeful seasons? Though the *manner* of it be concealed, the *operation* itself is evident. And it is the work of God. A work perpetually

tually going on, and, without doubt, particularly designed, as being particularly calculated to arrest our attention. The world originally sprang from divine love: and from the same principle proceed all the benevolent operations of Nature. But the material world is not the object of benevolence. It would never have existed, but for the sake of its inhabitants, to whom it affords a comfortable and happy dwelling. And who are its inhabitants? They are innumerable beings, of different orders, all capable of enjoyment in various degrees; the different orders

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orders rising one above another, in the scale of excellence and felicity; from the plant-like race, to us of human kind, who are so far honoured and blest, as to constitute the highest order of creatures with which we are conversant. Attend, O man, so highly favoured! and behold how the wisdom and power of thy Maker have contrived and executed his gracious purposes. Observe how *suitable* a habitation the earth is for those who dwell upon it. Here are birds curiously formed and accoutred, to make their way with alacrity, soaring high above the ground, through

through the element of air:—
and here is the element of air
provided for them. Here are
fish, by their structure (of the
most artful and inimitable work-
manship) destined to reside in
the water:—and here is the wa-
ter provided for them. Here are
other creatures, by their frame,
intended to walk or creep upon
the land:—and here is the land
provided for them. And, in
like manner, is the earth adapt-
ed to all its inhabitants, and
they to it. Why is it not a
quagmire, unable to sustain our
weight? Why is it not an im-
penetrable rock? Why is it not
one

160 MEDITATION ON

one sandy desert? Why is it not *all sea*? Why is it not *land only*? Why is it not involved in darkness, and frozen, instead of being enlightened, and embellished, and quickened by the sun's benignant rays? Why is it not scorched and consumed? Although it be true, that animals cannot live without breathing—why is there provided a fluid so fit for that purpose? Although their wasting bodies need often to be recruited, instead of such variety of food—why is any provided? Why is such a mighty power continually exerted to produce an effect so astonishing as the
con-

DIVINE LOVE. 161

version of *vegetable food* into flesh, and blood, and bones, and muscles, &c. an effect which is continually taking place in our own persons? Why should the food of an animal be *palatable* to him? Why should the food afford any thing beside mere nutriment? Why should it produce those fine spirits, whose brisk circulation yields that joy, that hilarity which we see in many animals? Why are they endowed with such happy instincts for the preservation and well-being both of the individual, and the species? And why art thou, O man! endowed with under-

M standing

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standing to consider these things?
The answer to all such questions
is this:—because the author
of the world is a most power-
ful, wise and benevolent being;
even that infinitely good God,
whom we, as Christians, pro-
fess to worship.

Now, had the gracious Au-
thor of the world conferred up-
on us of human kind, no more
than a capacity for *animal* en-
joyments, in common with other
animals, we should have expe-
rienced his bounty, as they do,
though they are ignorant of it.
But he hath been far more li-

beral

DIVINE LOVE 163

beral to us : having presented us with a *reasonable nature*, and therein with a capacity for intellectual, social, and moral, (which includes religious) happiness*.

WE

* The pleasures of the imagination might have been mentioned, which, if they do not absolutely depend upon intellect, seem, however, to be our peculiar property, and withheld from the inferior animals. These pleasures rightly managed (and every thing *perverted* loses its nature) have a very happy tendency to make the heart better, while they make it glad. Is it for nothing, that the world not only accommodates us with all the conveniencies of life, but, at the same time, offers to the delighted

WE have a very great pleasure in considering and comparing objects, and judging of them. And, perhaps, these faculties are seldom more agreeably exercised, than upon the phænomena of nature, of which we ourselves make an eminent part.—Perhaps no study is more generally pleasing. From hence, too, especially from the study of human nature, we derive the knowledge of morals, our hap-

imagination its beautiful and sublime scenery? No surely. From the study of natural to the contemplation of moral beauty and sublimity, the progress is easy and direct.

pieft

piest knowledge *. Nature and art together furnish an infinite variety of intellectual pleasures. And sometimes, where the genius is unusually strong, the pleasure of invention is super-added. Astonishing are the instances of human invention, which make their appearance in a great city : and, without doubt, great satisfaction had the curious artist in bringing his design to pass.

Is there, in the form of a human being, who relinquishes

* It must be confessed, indeed, that, without revelation, the moral science would have been very imperfect.

his social capacity? *He is not a man.* He has *renounced his humanity.*—The shocking effect of pride, or vanity, or false religion; or possibly of all three.—Behold another wretch, who thinks to make his advantage of society, by practising fraud and injury!—If the first have quitted society voluntarily, it were devoutly to be wished, that this other should be *driven* from the social part of mankind. These happily experience how sweet are “the charities of father, son, and brother:” how precious the sympathy of lovers and of friends; how tender the universal

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universal tie that binds the species together. Our gracious Maker intended we should derive much of our happiness from benevolent affections, and benevolent offices done and received: we *feel* that he framed us with this view. But, as a social creature, supremely blest is he *whose heart exults in the widest communication of good.*

I APPREHEND, both our social and intellectual acts, altho' they may be considered separately, under these denominations, must, at the same time, of necessity, be likewise moral: for,

it should seem, a moral agent can do nothing of importance, which is perfectly indifferent, as being neither good nor evil. Our moral capacity is our highest; and our moral happiness our best. As moral beings we are capable of discerning, and doing what is right and good, and the contrary. That also which we understand to be right and good, we necessarily *approve*; and what we understand to be the contrary, we necessarily *condemn*. From hence it is evident, that we must practice righteousness and goodness, in order to be happy. How should
he

he be happy who is *self-condemned*? If justice, fidelity, love, generosity and gentleness towards others, joined with self-command, sobriety and purity with respect to ourselves, will not ensure happiness—they seem, however, to be tending that way.—Yet if, being alone, they should fail, when grafted upon religious principle, and connected with religious worship, they never can. Supremely to venerate the eternal Father, to love him with unbounded gratitude, to trust in him with absolute confidence, to hope in his mercy, to rejoice in his goodness,

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ness, and to be entirely devoted to his wife, and holy, and gracious will, paying him filial obedience in the practice of all virtue——is to be *blessed*.*

VERY

* Or shall we affirm, that the poet was egregiously mistaken, when he said,

“ Hope, love, and joy, fair pleasure’s
“ smiling train,

“ Hate, fear, and grief, the family of
“ pain.”

Shall we declare that blessed is he that is unjust, base, treacherous, cruel, envious, wrathful, malicious? He that is intemperate and unchaste? He that lives as if there were no God; he that, therefore, never meditates with delight on the divine excellence and goodness; he that, when sinking under distress (the heritage,
more

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VERY various, indeed, are the advantages for improving their reason, allotted to different men, at different times, and in different countries; as also at the same time, and in the same country; but all have some advantages; and he that has fewest, if he makes a good use of them, though his happiness in

more or less, of human kind) hath no Almighty Friend to support him? If so—then, indeed, are we very strangely constituted, and very much amiss: but if (as we have affirmed) the contrary be true—then is our frame and constitution good, and *such as it ought to be*:—which some well-meaning persons seem very unwilling to allow.

the

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the present life should not be very great, in the future it shall be inconceivable to such beings as we are now. And this happiness, though not a Christian, he shall derive from the grace of the gospel. The Christian is enriched with the noblest privileges. And that Christian, who has little knowledge, beside what he has collected from the Bible, yet understands his religion, and is duly influenced by its heavenly principles—even he (in my apprehension) is possessed of more real excellence, and real goodness, than the most plausible

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plausible philosopher, who is so unhappy as to be an unbeliever.

WE are all the offspring of the glorious Deity, (as Paul declares to the Athenians) and he is kind and gracious to us all. But it seemed good to his infinite wisdom, to distinguish some of us from the rest, in a very remarkable manner. The same apostle affirms (Epist. to Galat. chap. 3.) that the gospel was preached to Abraham, when it was said to him, "in thy seed shall all nations be blessed:" and that the blessing of faithful Abraham was intended to come upon

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upon the Gentiles by Jesus
Christ. In this chapter it is af-
firmed also, that God made a
covenant with Abraham, which
covenant was confirmed in Christ,
and *was never disannulled* by the
law. This covenant the apol-
tle calls likewise the promise.
And I think we are plainly given
to understand, that all professing
Christians are *heirs* of this co-
venant or promise, and *the a-*
dopted children of God. Be-
cause it is said, “ ye are all *the*
“ *children of God*, by faith in
“ Jesus Christ: for as many of
“ you as have been BAPTIZED
“ into Christ, have put on
“ Christ

“Christ—and, if ye be Christ’s,
 “then are ye Abraham’s *seed*,
 “and *heirs* according to the
 “promise.” Now, unless *all*
 who ever were BAPTIZED into
 Christ, were somewhat *better*
 than professing Christians, to
such, of necessity, must these
 inestimable privileges belong.

FORMERLY the natural def-
 cendants of Abraham (in the
 line of Isaac and Jacob) were
 the sole heirs of the promise.
 The case, however, is now al-
 tered. They stumbled at that
 stumbling stone [the true Mes-
 siah] and thereby excluded
 them-

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themselves*. But we, Christians, are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people : that we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of the darkness of Heathenism into his marvellous gospel-light. We, *in time past*, were not a people ; but *now* are the people of God : we, *in time past*, had not obtained mercy ; but *now* have obtained mercy. We Gentiles † formerly were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from [or, ra-

* 1st Epist. of Peter, chap. ii.

† Epist. to Ephes. chap. i. and ii.

ther,

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rather, to] the covenants of promise, having no hope [comparatively] and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus [under the gospel] we, who some time were *far off*, are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both *one*; and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.— He came and preached peace to the Gentiles, who were *far off*, and to the Jews, who were *nigh*; [for the *believing* Jews were never excluded] and thro' him we both have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.

N

Now,

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Now, therefore, we are no more *strangers and foreigners*; but *fellow citizens of the saints*, and of *the household of God*. We Gentiles are now become *fellow-heirs*, and of *the same body*, and *partakers of the PROMISE of God in Christ*, by the Gospel. Indeed, we have much greater advantages than the Jews had before the coming of Christ. We have a much clearer idea of the dispensation of divine grace. We are favoured with a more perfect and spiritual doctrine, whereby to regulate our hearts and lives: together with the most affecting example of our kind

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kind and condescending Redeemer. We are begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Such are the inestimable privileges to which we Gentiles were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, being predestinated to *the adoption of children* *.

* I would wish every Arminian to consider, whether this be not a rational interpretation of St. Paul's doctrine? If such a one should look into these papers, I would beg of him to think, whether he can otherwise tolerably explain what is said concerning election and predestination.

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- “ Behold what wond’rous grace
“ The Father hath bestow’d,
“ On sinners of a mortal race,
“ To call them *sons of God*!
- “ Nor doth it yet appear
“ How great we must be made:
“ But, when we see our Saviour
“ here,
“ We shall be like our head.
- “ A hope so much divine,
“ May trials well endure,
“ May purge our souls from sense
“ and sin,
“ As Christ the Lord is pure.”

To

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To this end hath our most gracious God and Father chosen us—that we should be holy, and without blame, before him, in love.—So shall we not receive the grace of God IN VAIN:—so shall we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called:—so shall we make our calling and election sure:—so shall we, in due time, attain *happiness ineffable*, and *inconceivable*.

WE see, then, in some measure, how the Author of all good hath manifested his love to us, both as *men*, and as *Christians*. And will not Hea-

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ven and Earth testify their abhorrence of our ingratitude, if we love not him who hath *first* so wonderfully loved us? Our gratitude will be best declared, by our constant endeavour to *excel* in all virtue and goodness. Particularly we shall do well to meditate much and attentively upon the works and the word of God, and then apply the knowledge we gain to its proper use. Though it be only a *small portion*, it will render us wiser than the most knowing philosopher, who acts differently. Knowledge, like money, is good only as it is applied. If it serve

no

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no other purpose, than to gratify vanity, or even curiosity, ignorance were better. But if, thereby, both the understanding and the heart be improved; if it lead us to virtue, and to God—its end is happily answered.—— And hence we gather what *kind* of knowledge is most valuable.

WE ought to love God, because he first loved us; but not for that reason *alone*. It has been said, indeed, that there is no such thing as *disinterested love*. Thus much, however, is certain, that we may have a

delightful complacency in considering the character of a human being, who is greatly active in promoting happiness and virtue all around him, although we receive no other benefit from him, than what we derive from our reflection upon his amiable character; we may interest ourselves in his welfare, we may rejoice in his prosperity, we may love him.——Even so may we think, with the most delightful complacency, upon the character of the Deity, the blessed Author of all virtue and excellence, and happiness; who is ever active to promote these
through-

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throughout the vast creation, in the manner most agreeable to his infinite wisdom : we may interest ourselves in his welfare, we may rejoice in his prosperity, we may love him——not merely for the portion he hath allotted us, but——for the immensity of good which he has conferred, and is always conferring, upon the innumerable orders of beings which inhabit the universe. O, then, let us look, with attention, on that part of the works of God, which he hath exhibited to us ; and thus let us behold, as in a faithful mirror, *original excellence* and
good-

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goodness: and, beholding, let us venerate and love. As Christians, it will exceedingly become us.

ARE we Christians? Let us affectionately remember the worthy name whereby we are called: let us humbly recommend ourselves to our heavenly Father, intreating him for his Spirit, and kind assistance: with unceasing diligence let us labour, that we may approve ourselves to him in all our conduct: let us give thanks continually for his grace, in Jesus Christ, confessing our
sins

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sins and unworthiness : and let us hope and rejoice in his paternal love for evermore.

N. B. I would beg leave to recommend it to the Reader, to study carefully the following few, but excellent books ; if he should desire to see further into the subjects which these papers have slightly touched upon.——

Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. An Appeal to the Common Sense of all Christian People. Lindsey's Apology. Clarke on the Attributes, &c. Woolaston's Religion of Nature. Price on Morals. Locke on the Epistles.

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Epistles. Taylor on the Romans.

The same writer on Original Sin.

Also Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Atonement. To this last

gentleman I own myself greatly indebted, for his illustration of the sacred writings.——On the

subject of the Trinity, I think, the Appeal to the Common Sense,

&c. to be the book most generally useful, which I have seen :

being happily intelligible to the plain understandings of common

Christians, altho' a book filled with argument, and entering

deep even to the bottom of the subject.



F

S.

